

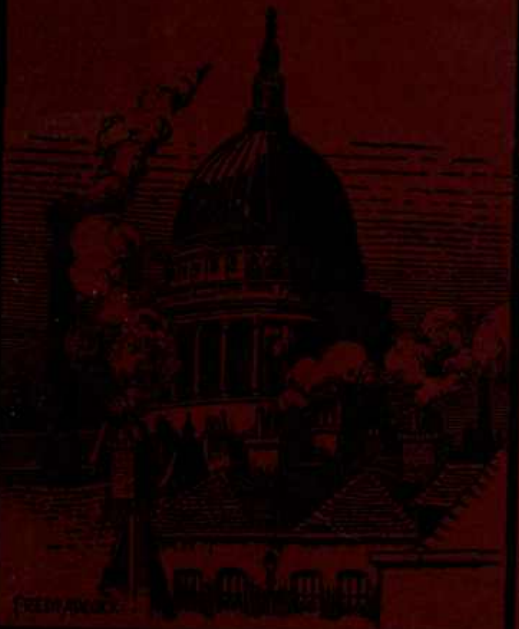
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# LONDON THE STORY OF THE CITY

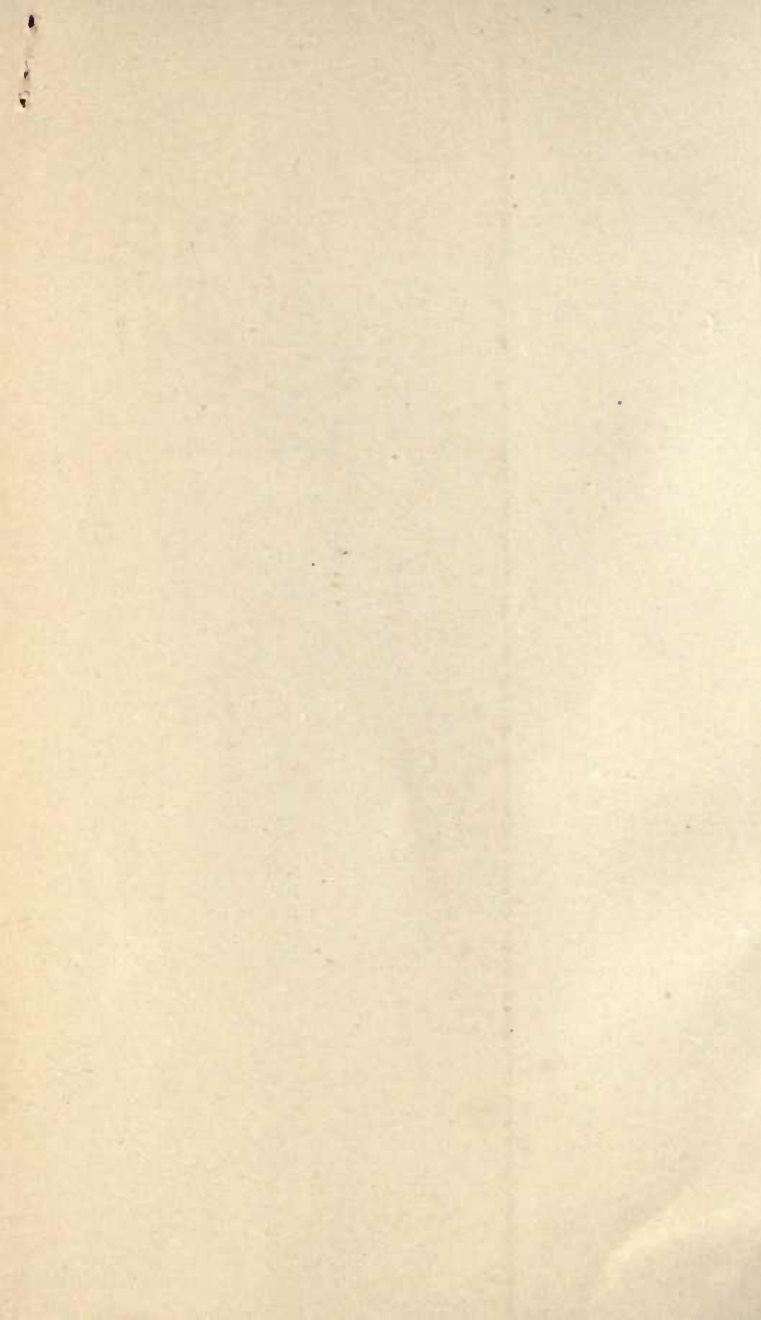


BY  
ERNEST RHYS

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THE STORY OF THE  
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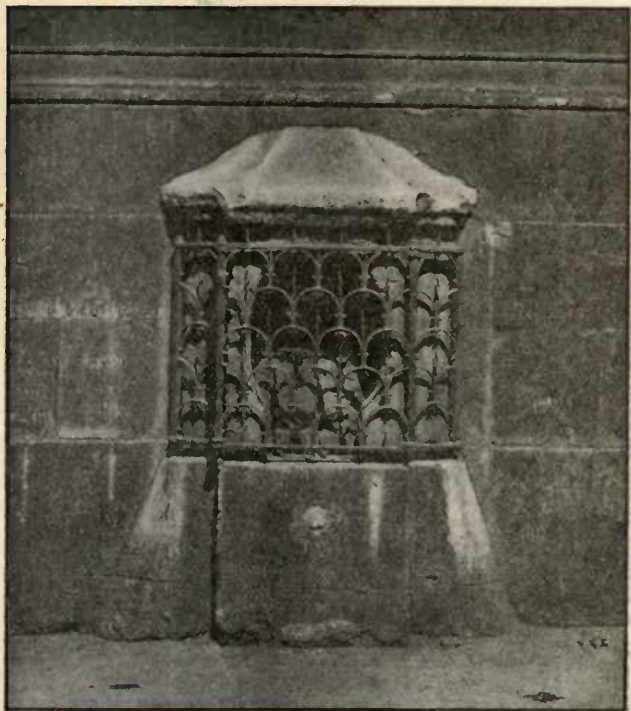
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LONDON STONE TO-DAY.  
(In the wall of St. Swithin's Church, Cannon Street.)



# LONDON

THE STORY OF THE CITY

BY

ERNEST RHYS

1859-1946

LONDON

THE PRIORY PRESS HAMPSTEAD

1909

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# LONDON

## THE STORY OF THE CITY

SOLIDLY encased and built into the wall of St. Swithin's Church in Cannon Street is a stone that tradition says is older than London itself. If that stone could speak, as many stones with ogams and Celtic inscriptions upon them have been made to do, it might begin the record for us, whose first signs we can barely distinguish. Even now LONDON STONE is a remarkable witness in the record of the city that lies about it. Together with *London Bridge* and *London Wall*, it forms a triad of ancient city landmarks, which helps to define the old place in the map and the original limits of the small town in the Thames marshes, destined to become a world's capital.

The tradition about London Stone, as retailed by Camden and others, is that it was the actual Roman *milliarium*, or central milestone, from which the outgoing roads and distances were measured, as they are from Charing Cross to-day. What rather bears this out is the fact that the older part of Cannon Street where it stood, although not at the present spot, was actually the eastern end of Watling Street, which carried the line of that great highway into the Roman citadel, and afterwards became the chief thoroughfare of the city that arose

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and clustered its houses on the same site. If before the Romans came, there was a British settlement here, Camden's suggestion that the stone first belonged to it is not altogether an unlikely one. The name of London, which comes from "Llyn"—lake or pool, and "din"—town or stockaded settlement, the Welsh or British term for the place, takes us back to some pre-Roman use of what was undoubtedly a site of many natural advantages.

In those days the lower valley of the Thames was largely marshland, with many tributary small streams, ditches and mud-flats, which were covered with water at high tide. But the lie of the land about London favoured the collection of a large tidal pool at high-water below the small hills and the gravel banks marked for us by the rise of Ludgate Hill and the uplifted dome of St. Paul's. Here was the pool or llyn which took its name from the "din"—Welsh *dinas*, Irish *dun*—that rose above its waters. The town, so to call it, was a small, stockaded timber-built place, smaller than Troy itself. It may have had lake-dwellings as its nearest neighbours. It certainly had a track-way leading off westward, that the Romans adopted for the road known to us as Watling Street. They brought stone, where wood had been used; built a strong wall on the northern side, the origin of LONDON WALL; threw out a trestle-bridge over the river, the first LONDON BRIDGE, and placed, as their custom was, a Stone from which to measure their roads at the centre of their citadel, and at a spot near that where LONDON STONE stood for well over a thousand years. It stood however





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on the opposite side of the street to that where it is now ensconced, and well out in the road, outside the gutter or channel ; so that it needed to be guarded and kept from cart-wheels by strong iron bars. A diagram of Roman London will show far better than any description the bounds of the town,—its gates, walls, bridge and main citadel, of which Wallbrook was the western boundary.

It did not at once take the form shewn in the chart. The Roman citadel was built about 40—45 A.D. Another date we can fix approximately lies between 350 and 370, and it relates to the building of the wall round the suburbs. Hardly had it been completed, before it was attacked by the Britons from the north, and saved by the hand of Theodosius the elder.

The spade has unearthed from time to time many tell-tale relics of Londinium. The opening up of London Wall (the street so-called) by the Post Office, in order to lay telephone mains, in January, 1905, led to fresh discoveries.\* These went to shew that the hidden and buried remains of the Wall were of very considerable extent at this point, confirming other accounts, that it was so well and soundly laid as to have provided foundation walls for many of the churches and mediæval buildings and their later successors, including the Church of All Hallows. Most curious discovery of all was that during the Roman occupation of London, which began under promis-

\* See the most interesting account contributed in June, 1906, by Mr. Philip Norman and Mr. F. W. Reader, the investigators, to the Society of Antiquaries.

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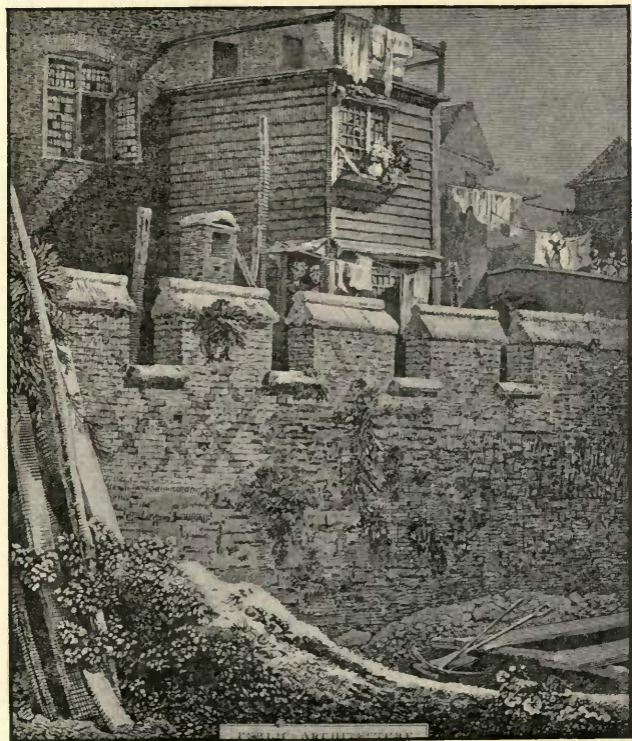
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ing conditions enough, the conditions changed for the worse. Brooks that had run clear became choked; and contrary to our accepted notions, the marshes seem to have gained on the surrounding ground. The Romans neglected the sanitation and drainage of their Augusta, with the result that under their rule, lasting some centuries, the city must have often suffered from fogs and malaria.

But we have stayed long enough in Roman London. When it came to an end, there followed a doubtful period, with one entry in the Saxon chronicle to mark the fatal event, in 457, when Hengest defeated the Britons in Kent, and they in their terror fled to London. The next century, the sixth, is almost a blank. At the beginning of the seventh, we hear of Ethelbert giving a bishop's see at London to Mellitus. But there is not much to be gleaned of its life as a city, or a place of any growing civil importance, until Alfred's time. It was harried by the Danes again and again; every vestige of the Roman polity and civil law died out completely; and when Alfred seized it from the Danes in 884 or 885, he found in it only a rude camp, with the Roman Wall—where it was not broken and patched with balks and timber—still standing on the north; and with the Thames dammed and banked up on the south and south-west.

By Alfred, the civil stamp and character of the London we know were first given to it. He was, says Mr. Loftie, its real founder. Some of the old divisions and boundaries made by him are still preserved. The old estates, or "sokes" of the rich citizens of





*(From an engraving by J. T. Smith).*

A FRAGMENT OF LONDON WALL  
In the Churchyard of S. Giles' Cripplegate, 1793.



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his time decided the lines of the city wards, when they were formed. He made good, and in large part rebuilt, the old Wall. Markets sprang up, at East Cheap and West Cheap. New gates, like Ludgate and Westgate, were built and opened ; and new roads were made, sometimes traversing and sometimes diverting the old. The early name, that had not been displaced by Augusta, was still maintained as Lundenbyrig or Londonborough. The central street in the Roman city, where London Stone stood, became Candlewick Street (Cannon Street). The government of the community became settled in the hands of those who really represented the commons. So the townsfolk, those who were free-men, had their folk-mote, their ward-mote, and their weekly "hustings" which had its various uses, akin in some ways to those of our county court. Then there was the knightengild—Stow's name ; whose knights were really city merchants and city aldermen. The guild helps to remind us that the early citizens and merchants of London, during the Danish wars, had to be soldiers too, prepared to fight for their own, and to stand siege. But the Danes never took the city.

Æthelred's coward policy, however, showed the fear of the Danes, which led him to the fatal step of St. Brice's Day, November 13, 1002, when every Dane in England was ordered to be killed. Swegen's sister fell in the butchery, but he had his revenge, and became king. His son Cnut was chosen by the Danes after him. Cnut was a wise and a strong ruler ; and the strength of London is shown by the way

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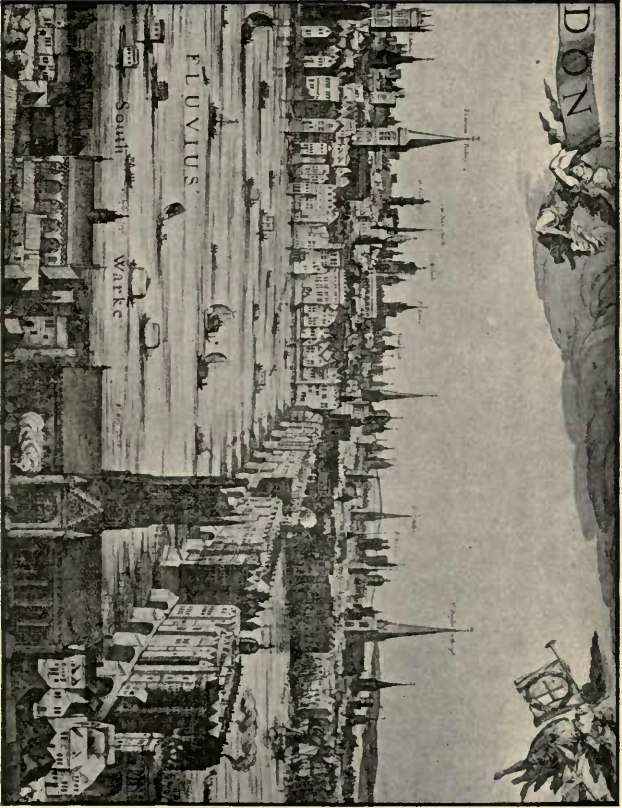
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in which she resisted his power and strategy. He took Southwark, and may have cut off Westminster; London he could not take, in spite of the canal which took his ships above London Bridge. However, by the treaty between him and Edmund Ironside, London became his capital. A few Danish names still remain around London; but the city bears hardly any traces or memories of the Danish hold upon its walls.

Those other Gallic northmen, the Normans, were to leave a different record. William the Conqueror had to recognise in his turn the strength of the City. He had to give it a Charter, by which its citizens held their rights and liberties: "And I will not endure that any man offer any wrong to you!" The Charter lies at the Guildhall. But William I. had his own sign-manual besides. The Norman argument was always a castle. He began to build the Tower of London on Tower Hill, just outside the walls.

The next charter was that of the first King Henry, which rather confirmed than altered the existing government of the city. The "hustings," the ward-mote, the folk-mote, were not interfered with. But to these, the Charter adds the new idea of London a corporation, although the old manors and "sokes," retain their rights.

This was in 1100. The next step was that by which the portreeve was made into the mayor of the city, some ninety years later. The unifying of the city's government accompanies this change. Henry FitzAylwin of London Stone is the first mayor we can clearly distinguish, though not the



(From the rare engraving by Visscher.)

VIEW OF LONDON BRIDGE, circa 1616.



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first perhaps actually in office. His name reminds us of the fine old patrician stock from which London loved to recruit her aldermen and city officers in the middle ages.

Their pride of office and her growing power were to be sorely tried in the next reign or two. But first let us turn for her story in these years to the invaluable brief record, written in Henry II's reign, by Fitzstephen, who was Thomas á Beckett's chaplain. The city he pictures for us is imposing. It had in it thirteen large, and one hundred and twenty smaller churches. This must refer to the outlying parts too; but we have to reduce his figures; for this city-recorder writes of the city in superlatives, as of a Cockayne where roast meats and red wines abound; where the good citizens and their wives are the handsomest in the world; where nearly all are inclined to the ordinances of Holy Church; and where piety, gaiety, and plenty reign together within the walls. Even the troubles of London come of its exuberance: its only plagues are the immoderate drinking of idle fellows, and the oft recurrence of fires.

Fitzstephen speaks too of the "brave sight of gallant horses" sold every Friday in Smithfield or Smoothfield; and of the sports, summer and winter, indulged in by the people. In Lent, the citizens' sons have sham-fights on horseback; at Easter counterfeit sea-fights and water-games on the Thames; and "when that great moor that washeth Moorfields, at the North Wall of the City is frozen over, great companies of young men go to sport upon the ice."

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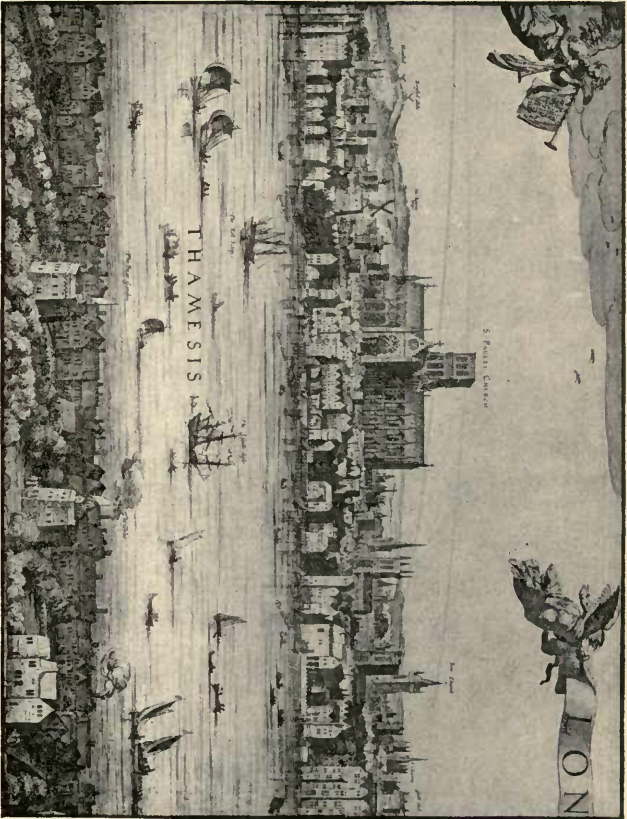
Some slide, some use sledges, and others "bind to their shoes, bones, and hold stakes in their hands, and go on with speed as doth a bird in the air." As to its trade: "to this city merchants bring in wares by ships from every Nation under Heaven." He ends his tale of *Civitas Londonia* in the vein with which he began: "Happy she is in the wholesomeness of her Air, her Christian Religion, her Munition and her Strength, the nature of her site, the honour of her citizens, and the Chastity of her women."

Fitz-Stephen spoke of the danger from fires. He was hardly old enough to have seen the disastrous fire of 1136, which was known as the Great Fire, until its memory was consumed by a successor. It began near London Stone, carried its flames along Watling Street to the new great church there, burnt the shrine of St. Erkenwald, and on the other side worked its way to the river, and burnt out all the woodwork of the bridge between the old Roman piers.

This was in King Stephen's reign, who proved almost as bad a friend to London as the fire itself, although he had begun his reign by an apparent bid for the loyal adherence of the city. But he used the high hand, at the first opening, and took away the rights of the citizens to elect their own sheriffs, and only gave it back on the payment of a heavy fine.

The act was ominous, for London was to suffer many such exactions from his immediate successors. The Mayor of London, in these passages, was apt to be left to bite his thumbs at Westminster, or at Windsor, and wait weary hours or even days before





*(From the rare engraving by Vischer.)*

VIEW OF LONDON SHOWING OLD ST. PAUL'S, circa 1616.

In the foreground are seen the Globe Theatre and the Bear Garden. In the distance the old Windmill at Hampstead.



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he could get an audience of the King. And as often as not he had to return humiliated, to find the money the king demanded. The struggle came to a head under Henry III.

A man of character and great ability, Thomas FitzThomas, was mayor when Henry was engaged in the struggle with Simon de Montfort; and he worked for London and its liberties, as did the other for English rights. The public sense of the citizens gained head under him: he was accused of inflating their self-importance. It is certain that now the merchants and the craftsmen began to fall into two different camps, and that this democratic mayor, by urging the workers to band themselves together, laid the train for the new order that followed. He was for all London and every Londoner, rich or poor; but he was before his time. The city chronicler, FitzThedmar, as well as the King, hated him. The temper of the man may be seen by his words to Henry III., at the Court at St. Paul's, 17th March, 1265, when he said—memorable words, and hard for a king to hear!—

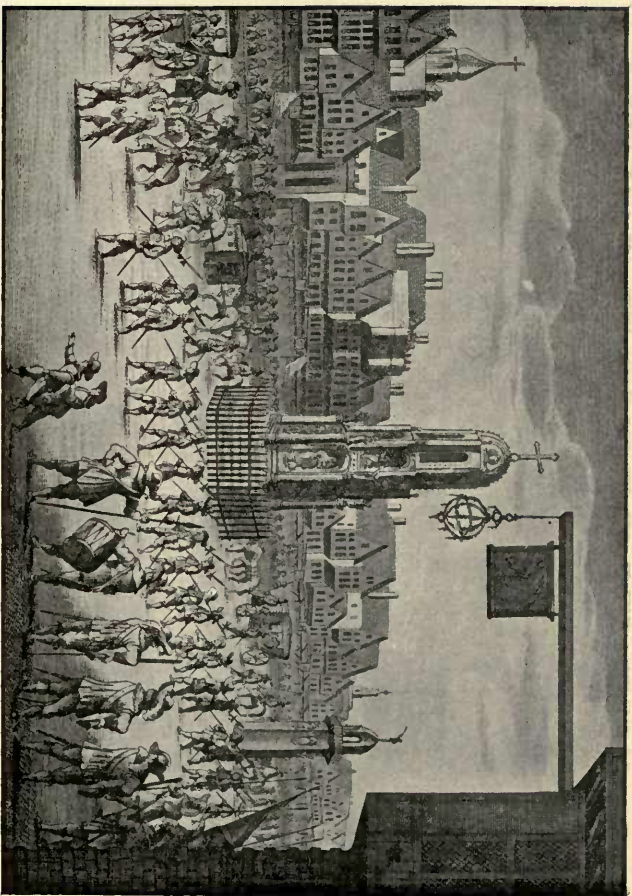
“ My lord, so long as unto us you will be a good lord and king, we will be faithful and duteous unto you.”

There spoke the City in one of her truest citizens; but she was to suffer for her courage. Henry III. had his revenge when after the battle of Evesham, his parliament at Winchester outlawed and disinherited many of her sons. Indeed, he called her citizens his enemies, although at the first English Parliament in 1264, he

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said he would never aggrieve them, or cause them to be aggrieved. A dark period for London followed, whose gloom had been signalled by a day, the 4th of August in 1264, when London folk were startled by "coruscations," lightnings and thunder! That was the day of Simon de Montfort's death at Evesham. There fell one champion of liberty. As for Fitz-Thomas he was summoned presently with his aldermen to Windsor, where, in spite of a safe-conduct, they were thrown into prison. The unlucky mayor never again saw the London he loved, and his office was left vacant, and the King's Warden at the Tower governed the mayorless city. So five years went by; and in 1269, the king allowed a new mayor to be elected, probably a man of his own. But next year, a popular successor to FitzThomas was elected—Walter Hervey, who had a house on Paul's wharf, and stood up for the rights of the common folk against the exactions and powers of the aldermen. Hervey set about forming the craft guilds, and carrying out other reforms; but he was marked, liked FitzThomas, as a dangerous agitator; and after his own mayoralty, his alderman's seat was taken from him. Before this, the purge of London, determined on to make it ready for Edward I., had been carried out ruthlessly, without any heed to the rights of the booth-holders, craftsmen, hawkers, and small traders settled in the open market at Cheap, whose adjacent road became known as Cheapside.

What was the state of the city at this time? Its face had suffered much from the troubled



*(From an old engraving.)*

A NORTH-EAST VIEW OF CHEAPSIDE.

With the Cross and Conduit, 1638, and showing part of the procession of Queen Mary de Medicis, mother-in-law to Charles I.



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years when king and mayor, merchant and craftsman, were at odds. The walls and gates were falling out of repair ; the streets and roadways were disgraceful ; cess-pools and dungheaps stood reeking at men's doors ; and strange distempers and putrid fevers did frequent and deadly execution. Fires were common ; and famines kept her folk in dread, like that of 1257, when wheat rose to twenty-four shillings a quarter, although bread enough to give a meal to a hundred men could in the usual way be bought for a shilling—say twenty shillings of our money. Edward I. was a strong ruler ; but his genius was a soldier's, and like a soldier he dealt with London. He gave her a charter of liberties, and the toll of the Thames at London Bridge for three years to pay for the bridge. Presently he set up a captain of the city of his own, in place of the mayor ; but this warden was not like Henry III.'s warden. He had to respect the rights, liberties and ancient customs of London in all things.

Meanwhile the streets and riverside alleys were to be cleaned and relaid ; the Wallbrook was to be cleared and kept clean ; the houses that stood upon the brook had to have rakes to keep the stream from getting foul ; pigs were not to be left to wander the streets at their unsweet will. In 1285, the first leaden pipes were laid to bring water from Tyburn to Cornhill. In 1296, London was called on to do her part for the defence of the kingdom, not without some show of opposition. Sir Ralph Sandwich was Constable of the Tower at this time, Sir John Breton, Warden of the City ; and they met the citizens and aldermen at

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the Guild-hall to settle the matter, and it is worth note, if we remember the doings of some of their predecessors, that they used much tact in doing it. Sandwich had already arranged for an armed watch at the gates ; and each citizen's arms and armour were inspected at intervals. Now, too, the London Records began to be kept at the Guildhall (from 1275 on). Reading these things, we gain a sense of a city whose law and order are growing and whose liberties are being made good, although encased in iron, and maintained with haketon\* and gambeson.†

It was a pretty thickly inhabited city in those days, for every city-merchant lived over his warehouse, and every shopkeeper over his shop, within the city-walls. Only the poorer folk, who had little property to lose, lived without them ; and went to and fro by way of Aldgate (or All-gate—the gate free of toll to all) to the village or suburb of Whitechapel, and other outlying hamlets. The city walls are shown clearly in our map, running from the Tower north to Aldgate, and then following the line of the Roman London-Wall past Moorgate, Cripplegate (“Crepul-geat,” the covered gate-way) not the gate of cripples as often supposed ; and Aldersgate—possibly the Alderman's-gate, where the General Post-Office stands. So, the wall and boundary continue almost due west for a couple of hundred yards, to the corner just north of Newgate ; and then south again to Ludgate, and so enveloping the Black Friars' or Dominican's monastery, and running

\* A stout leathern jerkin. † Leg-piece.



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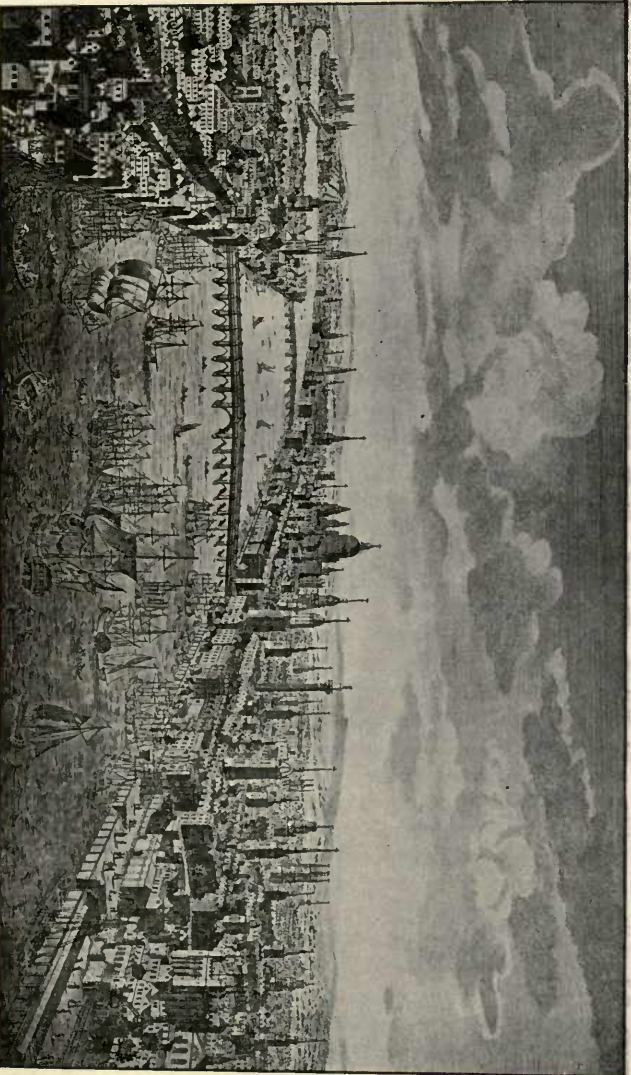
along the bank of the Fleet to the Thames. Ludgate reminds us to ask how it got its name? Some antiquaries used to say from a fabulous King Lud, who is represented, too, in the Welsh for London, "Caer Ludd." But in old usage, the word "ludgate" was a postern; and the conjuring up of King Lud is without warrant.

Entering London by Ludgate in or about the year 1380, what should we have seen? Old St. Paul's, flanked by St. Gregory's, rising up behind its walled close on the hill. As the dome to-day, so the tower and the famous wooden spire, five hundred and twenty feet high, formerly gave London its crown and chief landmark. The spire was burnt in 1561, and Hollyar's prints show us the building without it. Entering the precincts, we find there almost a town within a town. There are canon's houses on our right, and through other gates north and south of the cathedral-building, a stream of people keeps passing to and fro, either direct to the church-doors, or carrying bread from the bakehouse and ale from the brewhouse to the dean's and canon's lodgings, or the bishop's palace. Holding our way round the northern sides of the cathedral, we should come at length on the north-west corner to Paul's Cross, which, built of wood and of much-weathered stone, was already showing signs of decay. In 1382, we may add, the Cross suffered by the destructive May earthquake, so that its repair was urgently called for: and at last a national subscription was set on foot and more money subscribed than was asked for the purpose. If we had chanced to visit the Cross on

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Quinquagesima Sunday, or some other church feast, we might have heard a sermon preached there, and at times a very outspoken one. In 1389, a preacher cried out on the priests who had waxed fat : "They be clothed as knights, they spoken as earls, they riden as princes ; and all that is thus spendid is of the goods of poor men and of Christ's heritage." Paul's Cross in fact was the recognised open air cathedral-pulpit of London and of the country at large : the scene of conference, where the tradition of the old Folk Moot long hung. Stow describes Paul's Cross for us, as "a pulpit cross of timber, mounted upon steps of stone and covered with lead." Turn from the Cross to the old Cathedral : a superb big building, two hundred and thirty yards long by over forty wide, which at the time we speak of was its prime. The years of its trial were far off, when it was modified, restored, improved, and disimproved again until all its original Norman and early English grace and proportion were whittled away. The great nave, longer than Ely's, was begun 1088 ; the spire, the finest and tallest in the world, was finished in 1315. It was "so wonderfull for length and breadth," says Stow, that men were afraid the original design would never be carried out, and the building finished. However, finished it was, and richly endowed, and splendidly decorated and furnished, at this time—the late fourteenth century. Its rich furniture, gold and silver ornaments, chalices, candlesticks, jewels, copes, cups and vestments, are detailed in thirteen folio pages of the "Monasticon."



A GENERAL VIEW OF LONDON, circa 1760.

*From an old engraving published by Bowles and Carver at the Black Horse, in Cornhill.)*



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Those who have examined the gilded splendours of the side-chapels in some of the finer churches of France to-day, may have some notion of those in old St. Paul's, with their rich altars and ornate shrines. Most venerated place of all was the shrine of St. Erkenwald, whose feast-day was the chief festival of the year, ranking above that of St. Paul himself.

Stepping outside the churchyard near St. Faith's, and turning eastward, you would at this period have been astonished at the number of churches rising up there among the dwelling houses. Within Newgate, which was the neighbour of St. Paul's, Mr. Loftie gives a partial list of thirteen; some of which are familiar, some strange to us: "St. Martin's, St. Gregory's, St. Ewen's, St. Leonard, St. Michael-le-Querne, St. Vedast's, St. Faith's, St. Giles' Cripplegate, St. Anne, St. John Zachary, St. Augustine, St. Benet, and St. Peter, Paul's Wharf."

All round St. Paul's, the smaller churches gathered like chickens about a hen. Of those named above, St. Gregory's actually rested against its south-west corner; St. Faith's was the under-croft. St. Michael-le-Querne, which took its name from the corn-market hard by, was within a stone's-throw. Then St. Mary Magdalene was not far away in Old Fish Street, hidden by the intervening houses; and St. Augustine's was at the end of Watling Street, where it now joins old Change. After the fire, St. Augustine and St. Faith-under-St. Paul were joined together.

If we had turned down Watling Street in that day from St. Michael of the corn-market, and turned off into the market-

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place of Chepe, we should have passed St. Peter's, and then at the foot of Milk Street, St. Mary Magdalene, and presently found ourselves between the buildings of All Hallows' and Bow Church—St. Mary-le-Bow. The latter might well tempt us to enter, or at any rate linger for a time taking count of its delightful proportions, and the fine high tower with its arched top. It was from this arched or bowed tower that the church got its name "le Bow": a great landmark and a household word for the Londoners before the Great Fire. And fortunately, Wren, with a fine instinct, did his best for the church which is, after St. Paul's, the most striking of all the buildings he built or rebuilt.

Leaving Bow Church, we can turn (we are still in the fourteenth century, remember!) down by its eastern end along Hosier Lane, and, following this lane, we soon reach the point where Watling Street crosses it. Here we have confronting us St. Mary Aldermary, chief, as its name shows, among many St. Mary's—including St. Mary-le-bow, St. Mary Abchurch, Woolchurch, Woolnoth, Bothaw, Colechurch, Aldermanbury and Staining.

These are still but a small part of the whole; but they give you an idea how well be-churched and endowed with religious houses London was up to the reign of King Henry VIIIth. It is calculated that at his accession two thirds of the City were occupied by churches and ecclesiastical foundations. Many of the buildings were comparatively small; but those of the chief monastic settlements were worthy of a great city's magnificence. Such were the

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churches at Austin Friars and Black Friars. No trace of the two latter remains, nothing but the names. The nunneries included St. Helen's (near Bishopsgate) and the Franciscan house or priory of Poor Clares, after whom the Minories is called.

It is hard for us to estimate to-day what the mediæval London was like, with the narrow streets, fortified gateways, numerous small churches, and intermittent abbeys and priory-buildings, that the traveller passed between Ludgate on the west and the Tower on the east. Wren's stately churches changed the whole aspect of the scene. Many old buildings, like the "Eastminster," St. Mary of Graces on Tower Hill, admittedly very inferior to Westminster, have disappeared and left not a vestige behind.

We turn now from the religious to the workaday life of London. A passage from Stow gives us an idea of the change in the state of the people that was going on. London smoke is a thing we have all known and suffered from. Stow writes :

It was formerly thought to contribute much to the Preservation of the good Air of the City, that nothing was burnt here but wood or charcoal ; and that even in Trades where much Fire was used. *Ex Busea* (as it runs in a Patent of K. Edward I.) *vel carbore bosci fieri consueverant Artificum rogi, i.e.* The Artificer's Fires had been commonly made of Spray or Brush-Wood, or Wood coaled. But when Workmen living in the Out-Skirts of *London*, began to bring in the burning of Sea-Coal (which was about the Time of *Edward* the First) it was much complained of, as tending greatly to the making of the place

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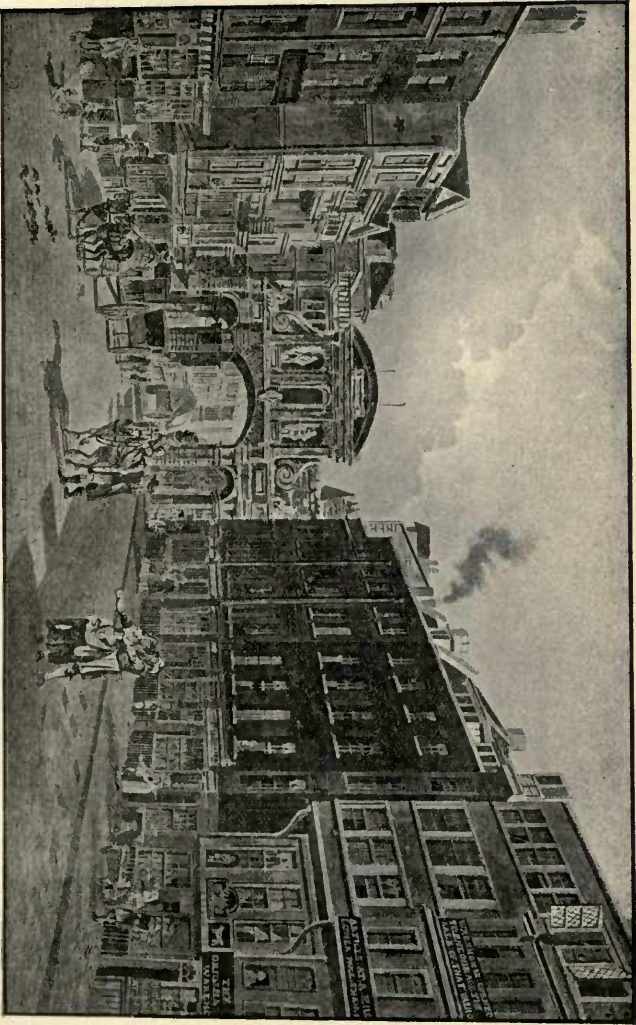
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unhealthful. About the latter End of that King it was, that Brewers, Dyers, and other Artificers, using great Fires, began to use Sea-Coals instead of dry Wood and Charcoal, in or near the City. Which occasioned the Prelates, Nobles, Commons, and other People of the Realm, resorting thither to Parliament, and upon other Occasions, with the Inhabitants of the City, and the Village of *Southwark*, *Wapping*, and *East Smithfield*, to complain thereof twice (one time after another) to the King, as a publick Nuisance; corrupting the Air with its Stink and Smoak; to the great Prejudice and Detriment of their Health.

The question of coal and fuel brings up the subject too of the lighting of the streets. In days when there was no gas, no petroleum, no electric light, and only dim lanterns at the door after dusk, the citizens loved to make the illuminations which became a tradition in the city :—

“In the months of June and July,” says Stow, “on the vigils of Festival Days and on the same Festival Days in the evenings, after the sun-setting, there were usually made Bonfires in the streets, every Man bestowing wood or labour towards them. The wealthier sort also before their doors would set out Tables furnished with sweet bread and good drink, and would invite Neighbours and Passengers also to sit and be merry with them in great familiarity praising God for his benefits bestowed upon them. These were called Bone-fires as of good amity amongst neighbours, that being before at controversie were there reconciled and made of bitter Enemies, loving Friends.”





(From a drawing by James Miller.)  
A VIEW OF TEMPLE BAR IN 1772.



## LONDON : The Story of the City

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Again we read that on the Vigil of St. John the Baptist and on St. Peter and Paul the Apostles, "every Man's Door being shadowed with green Birch, long Fennel, St. John's Wort, Oysin, White Lillies, and such like, garnished upon with beautiful flowers, had also Lamps of Glass with Oyl burning in them all the Night. Some hung out branches of Iron curiously wrought, containing hundreds of Lamps lighted at once, which made a goodly show, namely in New Fish-street, Thames-street, etc."

The mention of these herbs and flowers calls up a pleasant idea of the flower-gardens within the city limits. We know that there were many to be found there in the old time. Many of the greater dwelling houses and the City Halls could boast terraced walks, lime avenues, rosaries, and summer-houses to sit in.

"Grocers' Hall had its alleys, hedgerows, and bowling-alleys; Drapers' Hall its fashionable promenade; Merchant Taylors' Hall, its garden, with alleys and a terrace, and summer banquetting-room; Salters' Hall garden was originally that of the Priors of Torrington; and Ironmongers' Hall garden was noted for its vines and roses, and knots of rosemary. Gresham House was surrounded by pleasant gardens which extended from Bishopsgate-street on the one side to Broad-street on the other. One of Gresham's contemporaries, Sir Paul Pindar, had a garden and a park in the rear of his mansion, now a public-house in Bishopsgate-street." So far John Timbs, who reminds us, too, that Goodman's Field's was originally a farm, at which Stow, when a boy, had fetched many a

## LONDON: The Story of the City

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halfpenny-worth of milk: farmer Goodman's fields being subsequently let for garden-plots; here was a "Rosemary-lane."

The history of the City Halls themselves, and their building and rebuilding, would take too long a page for this brief chronicle. The influence of the City Companies and the old Trade Guilds waxed by sure degrees. In 1327 we find the Merchant Taylors figuring as the Linen Armourers, when a charter was given to them and to the goldsmiths and skinners. After that time the trade organisation of London went on apace; the "misteries," guilds and companies multiplied; and every citizen who wished to be respectable, to "have two gowns to his back," and become a freeman of the city, was bound to belong to one of these livery companies or another. In all the tradition of the city corporation as it has still existed up to the seventh Edward's time, we discern the root and principle of municipal life that grew up centuries ago, and has changed in no essential since the fourth Edward sat on the throne.

During that time the whole face and aspect of the city changed, but not its government, based on the old Saxon communal law. Henry VIII. and the Reformation did their work in the churches. Fire after fire, one century after another, swept the city, altering familiar corners, or bringing down a proud landmark like the spire of old St. Paul's; until the last Great Fire of 1661 ate up three quarters of the city; and this led the way to the rebuilding of London by Wren, the master-builder.



*(From an engraving by Morris.)*

A VIEW OF LUDGATE HILL and S. MARTIN'S, LUDGATE, 1795.



## LONDON : The Story of the City

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We know how the power and wealth of the city grew, year by year, century by century ; and we see it all reflected in the person of its civic head. When did the Mayor become actually a Lord Mayor? Some say in Edward III.'s reign, about 1354 ; others date it many years earlier, to Sir John Blount, who was certainly a knight, or to some of his forerunners, who seem to have had courtesy-titles of knights. Later on, as the mayor had the awkward privilege of being taxed as an earl, he fully deserved to carry too a lord's dignity. The mayors at first were kept in office for several years, and were not subject to the direct control of the city. In 1319, however, a rule was set up which made the office virtually an annual one. Forty-five years later, a mace-bearer was given to the mayor by the king, to enhance his and the city's honour. The right to choose mayor and sheriffs was vested in the masters and wardens of the city companies in 1473. The first mayor's feast at the Guildhall was held in 1502, when the king himself was present, and gave it the name of the Merchant Taylors' Feast. We cannot attempt to record all the feasts, shows and pageants that came to be associated with the annual election of the Lord Mayor as time went on.

A more important chapter of her life ; which we have not perhaps shown sufficiently, is that of the fires, plagues, and famines, whose fear was always before her people in the old days ; such was the plague or Black Death of 1348—a year when, says Dr. Howell in his "Medulla Historiæ Anglicanæ," it rained from midsummer to Christmas." He adds, in

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London the plague was such "that in one year's space there was buried in the Cisterian or Charter-House churchyard above 50,000." It continued ten years, on and off, and was "seconded with murrain of cattel and dearth of all things." Another fifty years brought the plague again, with almost as fatal a levy. These troubles weighed heavily on men's minds and prepared the way for a moral change. The voice of the Wickliffites, preaching at St. Paul's Cross, sounds the ominous note plainly, in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

Wickliffe's great trial before the Bishop of London took place at St. Paul's in 1370, bringing very near another event that stirred the city to its vitals, owing to the Poll Tax cruelly imposed on the peasantry in 1378. We mean the rising of Wat Tyler, John Ball, and Jack Straw, in 1381, well described by Froissart, whose sympathies of course were not with the peasants :

"With their followers, they were at first stopped in their progress into the city by London Bridge, which was strongly guarded by the mayor and the loyal citizens, but the defenders were soon obliged to give way, and the insurgents were permitted to pass in small bodies composed of their different villages. They set fire to the king's prison, the marshalsea, and the Duke of Lancaster's magnificent palace on the banks of the Thames, the Savoy; they then plundered and burnt the house and hospital of the Knights Hospitallers at Clerkenwell; and afterwards paraded the streets and killed every Fleming they could find. Towards evening they fixed their quarters in a square called St. Catherine's, before the Tower, declaring that they would not





*(From an engraving by John Hudson.*

CHEAPSIDE IN 1823.



## LONDON : The Story of the City

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depart thence until they should obtain from the king everything they wanted. Richard in answer promised to meet them on the morrow in a field at Mile-end, when he would hear their grievances.

“The next morning, having remained in the city all night feasting and rioting, they held a consultation in Smithfield, where, every Friday, the horse market is held, and there they were suddenly come upon by the king, who was riding that way attended with about sixty followers. On seeing the king, Wat Tyler commanded his men to remain quiet, while he went forward to speak with him. Accordingly he spurred his horse, and came so close to the king that his horse’s head nearly touched him ; during the conference, which was very brief, the tyler having demanded the king’s sword from a squire who bore it, and being refused, swore, in a violent passion, ‘he would have his head before he eat again’ ; the king, growing angry, said to the Mayor of London, William Walworth, who at that moment advanced with twelve of the aldermen and principal citizens, who were armed under their robes, ‘Lay hands on him.’ Upon this, Walworth drew a kind of scimitar (a short and broad back sword, being towards the point like a Turkish scimetar) which he wore, and struck the tyler such a blow on the head that felled him to his horse’s feet. When he was down he was surrounded on all sides, so that his men could not see him, and one of the king’s squires, called John Standwick, leaped from his horse, and drawing a handsome sword thrust it into his belly, and thus killed him. His men advancing saw their leader dead, when they cried out, ‘They have killed our captain : let us march to them and slay the whole.’ Whereupon the king rode up to them, and said, ‘Gentlemen, you shall have no other captain but me ; I will be your king.’”

## LONDON : The Story of the City

The revolt of the men of Kent, in 1450, under Jack Cade, was another occasion when war was carried into the heart of the city. Cade, who had some sense of military art, led his men triumphantly into the city one afternoon, and coming to LONDON STONE struck it with his sword, declaring himself, under his assumed style of Mortimer, "Lord of London." Two days later, he was hotly pursued by Iden, the sheriff of Kent, and taken and beheaded in a garden at Heyfield.

Jack Cade brings us to the Wars of the Roses, in which the City took the Yorkist side, and singularly profited thereby in the end. This was in 1461, when the White Rose had its winter-flowering at the battle of Mortimer's Cross, and Edward Earl of March came to London, and was hailed King—fourth of the Edwards. He repaid the help London gave him by two Charters' confirming her old rights and giving her new tolls and dues. In his reign Caxton set up his press at Westminster. The first City press was established before the close of the century; and some of the books which afterwards gave England her chief fame were printed in or near to St. Paul's Churchyard.

In 1485, came another plague in the dreaded form of the sweating sickness—a virulent disease of the influenza type. It claimed thousands of victims, many of whom died in four-and-twenty hours. It reappeared in 1499—1500, 1506, 1517, 1528, and 1551. We hear how Henry VII., in the first visitation, rode in a closed carriage through the city to avoid the infection; and how two mayors and six aldermen

## LONDON : The Story of the City

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died of it in one week. At the next return, it swept away 30,000 Londoners. These were fatal days alike to men and princes ; for in November, 1499, the last of the Plantagenets—the Earl of Warwick—was beheaded on Tower Hill.

We have already spoken of the effect upon the city of the Reformation in Henry VIII.'s reign, and the breaking up of the great religious houses within the walls. But before that came about we ought to recall the outburst of jealousy of the foreigner and stranger within the gate, which led to Evil May Day, 1517. The rising was given a head by the 'prentices, but their masters egged them on. Fifteen of the unlucky rioters paid for their pocket-patriotism by being executed. Meanwhile, if the City wished to keep the foreign trader out, she welcomed foreign additions to her larders and cellars, as an old rhyme of 1525 tells, which runs :

“Turkeys, carps, hops, pippins and beer,  
Came into England all in one year.”

Henry VIII. did not let Tower Hill forget its continual tragedy. The City saw many victims go to the Tower during his reign, including Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell. Sir Thomas More's noble head was set on London Bridge after his execution on the 7th July, 1535.

Against these dark associations, we must set the royal pageants in which the Tower figured, and which, if they were on the Thames, the citizens watched from their houses and the gardens and quays on the river-banks much as Hammersmith

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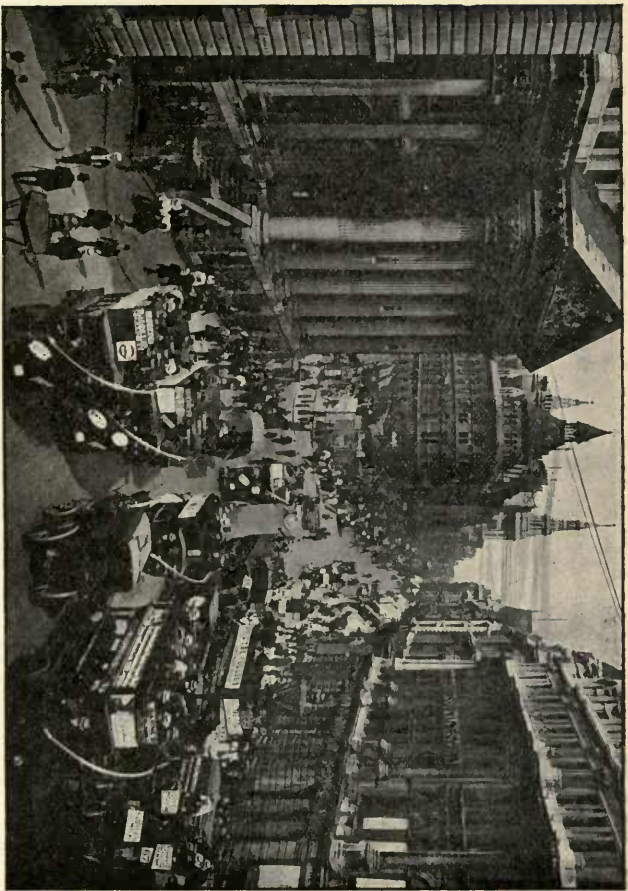
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watches the 'Varsity boat-race now. It was so that in January, 1559, Elizabeth went by water, attended with all the pomp and pride of the city, to the Tower, to await her coronation two days later.

The city had prepared for the Coronation Day a series of Pageants—triumphal arches, richly gilt and painted, in the principal streets, with complimentary legends inscribed thereupon. The last pageant represented "Deborah, Judge and Restorer of the House of Israel," a symbol of herself. To make an impressive close to these moral shows and royal compliments, the Recorder of London stood forth at the western end of Cheapside in state, and presented her with a splendid and ample purse, containing one thousand marks in gold. The queen graciously received it with both hands, and answered his harangue "marvellous pithilly."

Of the terrible return of the Plague in Elizabeth's time, we might give many city statistics. The sanitation was quite as bad as some of the smells alluded to in the Elizabethan plays would go to prove it. In 1580, as a precaution against the plague and the high price of fuel and victuals, a proclamation was issued to restrain the further growth of London, and the erection of any new house within three miles of the city gates was prohibited, and not more than one family was allowed to live in a house. In 1593, some 28,000 people died of the plague in London; another plague ravaged London and its suburbs and swept off 17, 890 persons.

More plagues followed in 1603, 1604 and 1605. It was high time for the purge of



CHEAPSIDE IN 1909.





## LONDON : The Story of the City

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London by fire and water, that we date in this seventeenth century. The last came peaceably through the New River and water pipes of a famous Welshman, Sir Hugh Middleton. The first came after the climacteric PLAGUE of 1665 which seemed like to destroy the population. The FIRE began one Sunday morning, September 2, 1666, in Pudding Lane, New Fish Street, started by an over-heated baker's oven. An east wind helped the flames, which raged furiously till Tuesday evening and were not finally got under till the Thursday.

Four hundred streets and thirteen thousand houses were burnt down in the Great Fire; and the loss was estimated at over seven millions. But it gave to London a new lease of health and life, and offered to Sir Christopher Wren an opportunity such as can rarely come to any architect in the rise and fall of cities. To appreciate his work, you ought to visit, not only St. Paul's and Bow Church,—which is, in its way, just as beautiful—but all the Wren buildings, in that circuit, especially those which, like St. Alban Wood Street and St. Mary Aldermary, show how he used the remnant of the old architecture in designing the new. And Wren's influence did not end with his own buildings. He left his style to affect the builders who came after him, and who, consciously or deliberately or no, formed their work to accord with his. Thus his stamp is on the City of London to-day, as no other man's can ever hope to be.

Since 1723, when Wren died, the City has seen many of its public buildings grow up; but none architecturally to compare with

## LONDON : The Story of the City

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his. One definite change that has passed over the aspect of the streets is due to the gradual complete obliteration of the dwelling-house.\* The great banks, city warehouses, many-storied office buildings, and railway stations, have eaten up the sites everywhere. Herein lay the second transition of the city. The first was due to the diversion of the monastic houses at the Reformation, and the break-up of the old mediæval city which was two-thirds ecclesiastical.

Of the present city buildings, the *Royal Exchange* was built in 1844; the *Guildhall* has some old walls dating from Henry IV.'s reign, which resisted the Fire, and a fine crypt of the same date, but its front is late eighteenth century, poorly designed by Dance; the Bank of England was built by Sir John Soane; the Mansion House by Dance, whose design however, to do him justice, included a broad flight of steps instead of the mean little side-stairs now in use.

A word remains to be said about the present London Bridge, built in 1824—7 from Rennie's design. Though its earliest predecessors were wooden, the stone bridge that it superseded was built as early as the twelfth century by Peter Coleman. His was the narrow bridge with houses on it, and the Beckett chapel in the middle, and gates at either end, which the old Londoners knew and were proud of, and which figured in the plays and nursery tales. It

\* It is calculated that fewer people actually sleep in the City now than when it was in the hands of the Romans themselves.



LUDGATE HILL IN 1909.



## LONDON : The Story of the City

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was only forty feet wide, and not intended for or used by carriages, being built in the day of pack-horses. Hosiers and small tradesmen had their shops there; and after the dismantling days of Henry VIII., the Beckett chapel became a booksellers' shop. On the out-jutting buttresses were water-mills for grinding corn; and at a later date in Elizabeth's time, water-works for supplying the city with (very doubtful) drinking water. The houses were burnt at the Great Fire, and some of them rebuilt. But about a hundred years later, they were all pulled down.

Blackfriars Bridge at one end of the City and the Tower Bridge at the other, roughly define its water-side, and if we add the railway-bridge that brings in the London, Chatham and Dover line to Cannon Street, we have its tale of bridges too, complete. From Cannon Street Station, we cross the street again to St. Swithin's; and, standing there, try to realise how long and how vital has been the influence upon the country over the Thames and beyond the radiating railways, and the other countries over the sea, of this small city of a mile square, clustered about London Stone.

\* \* \* \* \*

A page should be added to tell how far the old Wards and divisions, and the government of the CITY, have been affected by the changes of our own day. The forming of the London County Council in 1899 did not break up in any way the privileged order of the Corporation, and its Aldermen, Sheriffs and Lord Mayor. Four of the 137 members of the County Council are

## LONDON : The Story of the City

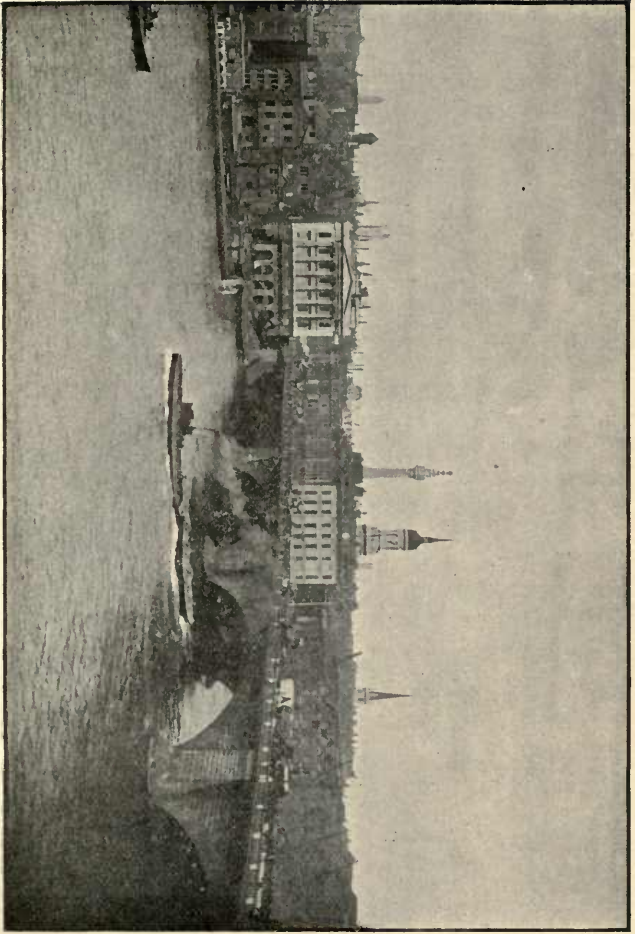
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sent by the City ; but it still keeps its hold and control over its own affairs, maintains its own police and its own markets, and makes its own rules for its streets and traffic as of old. The Wards, too, into which it was first divided some six hundred years ago, remain, twenty-four in number. Their names are often eloquent of their history, and as some of them are curious, and not commonly known to outsiders to-day, they may very well be given here : Aldgate, Aldersgate, Bassishaw, Billingsgate, Bishopsgate, Bread Street Ward (forming the western part of Cheap), (London) Bridge Ward, Broad Street Ward, Candlewick Street (Cannon Street), Castle Baynard, Ward of Cheap, Coleman Street, Cornhill (very small), Cripplegate, Dowgate, Farringdon Within, Farringdon Without, Langbourne, Lime Street, Portsoken, Queenhithe (small ; once very much inhabited), Tower Street, Vintry (small riverside Ward, French wine trade), and Walbrook.

The Lord Mayor is elected by the Livery Companies, like the Sheriffs ; neither office has anything to do with the County Council. The Guildhall belongs of course to the Corporation. Another relic of the old order is to be found in the City of London regiment, the Royal Fusiliers (formerly the 3rd Buffs, or East Kent regiment), which was formed out of the London Trained Bands :

“ A train-band Captain eke was he,  
Of famous London town ; ”

as Cowper describes John Gilpin. This is the only regiment that has a traditional



LONDON BRIDGE IN 1909.





## LONDON : The Story of the City

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right to march with colours flying through the city. The allusion recalls how the Earl of Oxford used to ride to his house by London Stone "with eighty gentlemen in a livery of Reading tawny and chains of gold about their neck, before him; and a hundred tall yeomen behind, without chains, but all having the Blue Boar on their left shoulder." And the Blue Boar in turn recalls the Old Boar's Head Tavern, where Falstaff and his friends met, and where Goldsmith wrote his "Reverie." The unimpressive statue of William IV. stands on the very spot. The old tavern was pulled down for King William Street; but on a quiet Saturday evening, when the city is deserted, you will find that you can rehabilitate and repeople many of the old places, discern the landmarks of the ancient city amid the new surroundings, and still hear the feet of Roman soldiers in Watling Street.



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